

The mischievous Consequences of publick Strife and Envy.

A
S E R M O N

PREACH'D at
BLACK-FRYARS,
ON THE
XXXIst. of January, 17¹³/₁₄.

By S. WRIGHT. *R*

Thus saith the Lord, For three Transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away the Punishment thereof: because he did pursue his Brother with the Sword, and did cast off all Pity, and his Anger did tear perpetually, and kept his Wrath for ever, Amos i. 11.

These are the things that ye shall do, speak ye every Man the Truth to his Neighbour: And execute the Judgment of Truth, and Peace in your Gates: And let none of you imagine evil in your Hearts against his Neighbour; and love no false Oath: For all these are things that I hate, saith the Lord, Zech. viii. 16, 17.

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STEREOTYPE



BLACK

XXIX of 1871

BY S. W. RICHES

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J A M E S iii. 16.

*For where Envyng and Strife is, there
is Confusion, and every evil Work.*

THE Unchristian and Illegal Execution of KING CHARLES I. being, at this Season, the common Subject of Conversation, and the Occasion of many warm and bitter Declamations in our Publick Churches, I could not think of any Text more fit to be insisted on, or more likely to gain your Attention, than this.

And, methinks, the *Confusion* of those dreadful Times, and the *evil Works* which followed upon the *Envyings* and *Contentions* then prevailing, should be a sufficient and continual Warning to after-Ages not to fall into the like Animosities.

The *Chapter*, out of which the Words I have read to you are taken, begins with a *Caution*, that intimates there were some who set up for *Masters* and Teachers of others, whose disorderly Spirits and Behaviour wanted a great deal of Correction. And who, by assuming the Place of Leading Men, made their Offences the more remarkable, and stood exposed to greater *Condemnation*. After which follows such a Description of the *Tongue*, when an ill Use is made of it, that I cannot forbear reading it, with a short Paraphrase, to you; and I believe you will hardly forbear applying it to some others.

The Tongue is a little Member, and boasteth great things; mightily exalting it self by its great Performances. Behold how great a Matter a little Fire
A 2 kind-

kindleth: And the Tongue is as a Fire, a World of Iniquity is kindled by it.

*So is the Tongue amongst our Members, as Fire among Wood *, it defileth, spots or blackens, the whole Body, and setteth on Fire the Course of Nature, or the Succession of Men in the World, and it is set on Fire of Hell.*

It resembles Fire also in this, that when it hath once got the mastery, it cannot easily be subdued and extinguish'd: *For every kind of Beasts, and of Birds, and of Serpents, and things in the Sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed by Mankind. But the Tongue, of another, can no Man tame; it is an unruly Evil, and, like the Serpents just mentioned, full of deadly Poyson. Therewith blest we God, even the Father of us all; and therewith curse we Men, which are made after the Similitude of God. Out of the same Mouth proceedeth Blessing and Cursing: Words pretending to honour God, whilst all manner of uncharitable Censures and Curses are pronounced against those that bear his Image.*

Well might the Apostle add, *My Brethren, these things ought not so to be. For doth a Fountain send forth, at the same Place, sweet Water and bitter? Can the Fig-tree bear Olive-berries, or a Vine Figs? Surely no; and, if Nature produceth no such contrary Fruits, much less should Grace produce things so extreemly opposite as are Blessing and Cursing.*

Now the great Occasion of all this, is a false Esteem which Men are apt to have of themselves and their own *Wisdom*; St. James therefore, in the 13th Verse, shews, wherein *true Wisdom* consists. And in the 14th Verse he tells us, that

* See Dr. Whitby's Paraphrase throughout the whole of this Passage.

where there is an *envious* and *contentious* Temper, there is no reason for any to glory of their Wisdom; and that whoever should do so, boasted of what they had not, *and lyed against the Truth*. It seems indeed to be allowed, that such Management, as arises from a prevailing Dis-esteem of others, and a secret Uneasiness at every thing that is good in them, or possessed by them, exciting many warm and violent Contentions, may gain the Reputation of Wisdom in the World: But then the 15th Verse expressly assures us, that *such Wisdom do's not descend from above, but is earthly*, arising from a Love of earthly Things; *sensual*, proceeding from the Lusts and Corruptions of the Flesh; *yea devilish*, coming from Satan the Promoter of Strife and Envy; and from Pride and Ambition, by which he fell. And then, in the Words of the Text, he proves such Wisdom to be from such an Original, by the Fruits and Effects of it: Instead of *Peace* and *Holiness*, which are the Product of *heavenly Wisdom*; that which works by *Envy* and *Strife*, brings *Confusion*, and *all manner of Wickedness*.

I shall here take occasion, I. Briefly to explain these several Expressions. II. Confirm the Truth of this Assertion. III. Draw some Inferences from it.

I. I shall *explain*, as briefly as I can, these several Expressions, *Envy*, *Strife*, *Confusion*, and *every evil Work*.

By *Envy* is meant an uneasiness in a Man's Spirit, arising from the Goodness or Happiness of another that he dislikes; whereby he is put upon doing all he can to injure and molest him. The *envious Man* is one that is fired with an unjust

just and intemperate Zeal against his Brother. The *Greek* Word here translated Envyng, *ζήλος*, strictly speaking, is Zeal, which is frequently used in a bad Sense *: And, I am sure, has often shewn it self in a very ill manner. The *Object* of Envy is sometimes the Rich, the Great, the Honourable: And it must be acknowledged, that even *good Men* are too apt to look with uneasiness on the outward Prosperity and Advantages of the *Wealthy*, and the *Promotion* of some in the World. But where the Spirit becomes most restless and inflam'd, it is when the *publickly useful, pious, and vertuous Man* is set up as the *Object* of envious Thoughts and Designs. The Fame and Advantages of Religion are strongly coveted by those who have no liking at all to the Practice of it.

This feverish and rankerous Distemper of Mind must necessarily produce *Strife*. It creates a great many Struggles and Disorders in a Man's own Breast: And it raises warm Contentions with others. The Word here rendered *Strife*, may include all kind of eager Debates, and reproachful, reflecting Expressions, in Conversation; as also downright Quarrels in Mens acting against one another: And an unreasonable Frowardness and Stiffness in their Carriage during such Oppositions. Thus Magistrates have sometimes been striving by Persecution; and Subjects by Rebellion; and equal Powers, by all manner of Violence, have been endeavouring to subdue one another. And as we read of a *striving unto Blood*, in the Cause of Christ; so we have Instances of Mens striving unto Blood, in their opposing of it.

* Vid. Suicer. Thesaur.

The next thing mentioned, is *Confusion*; the Margin reads it *Tumult*. By Contention and Party Heats, all is thrown into Disorder; and Men are hurried to all kind of lawless and tumultuary Proceedings. No regular impartial Sentiments can then take place; but Good and Evil are confounded; Justice and Mercy lost; and nothing is consulted but the gratifying Mens Passions and Resentments. And tho' there may be here and there a Man that maintains his Religion, Humanity and Integrity, and would be glad to bring things into order again, yet, *when the Foundations are destroyed, what can the Righteous do?* When the Pillars of Government are shaken, and those who should support and strengthen them, are carried, either by Spleen or Ambition, to break in upon all the standing Rules of Truth and Justice; What Words can describe the Confusions that must arise from hence? All is unhing'd and unsettled, and the generality of People are driven to and fro, as Power, Interest, Pride, any thing, but Principle, leads them.

Psal. xi.
3.

So that lastly, *Every evil Work* aboundeth. When *Contentions* prevail, nothing is then regarded but the PARTY Men are of: All Kinds of Wickedness are then committed every where; and the very worst of Crimes are conniv'd at, if not encourag'd, by those who should punish them. The Law loses its Force, and Religion loses it Awe, and Men are left to act as they please. And from the Heart of Man, especially in such a State of Things, proceed Murders, Adulteries, Fornications, Thefts, False-witness, Blasphemies: All which Evils are then committed with greediness.

II. I shall now offer something to *confirm the Truth of this Assertion*, that where *Envy and Strife is*, there will be *such Confusion, and every evil Work.*

I. This is evident from the *Nature and Reason of the Things themselves.* As an envious, contentious Disposition spreads and heightens, it has a natural Tendency both to spoil Mens Judgments, and to corrupt their Manners. They catch at every thing that may cherish their Ill-will; and look sour even upon the best and most commendable Behaviour of those they are resolved to be against: Nay, such is the Nature of this Vice, that the Better a Man really is, the more displeasing shall he prove to his invidious Neighbour. Yea, he will rather be wicked, and defend his Wickedness, than show any Agreement, or do any thing that looks like Conformity to the envy'd Person.

So that if any Conversation, or seeming Correspondence is maintained, it must needs be very painful and uneasy, continually Misunderstanding, and sadly Misrepresenting all that passes.

But as such Conversation cannot hold long, so 'tis no sooner broke off, but Men are set at such a Distance from one another, that they presently lose the Remembrance of what was agreeable in each other, and only retain their Disgusts; which puts 'em upon improving every thing they can to each others Detriment.

Hereupon, Jealousy and Imagination suggests things that never were; and suspects things that are never like to be; and gives the most perverse Turns to things that have been, or that really are. By these means a Race of new and strange Creatures are brought into the World; and when by
monstrous

monstrous Descriptions a sufficient Odium and Hatred is excited, then truly, certain Men, upon occasion, are to be pointed at as the Creatures spoke of, and must be treated accordingly; tho', at the same time, they are the furthest from Being what they are Reported.

But now this wicked Temper supporting it self by Lyes, and calling in the Help of every false Tongue, it creates a greater Firmness and Resolution in those who see and know the Falshood of such as oppose them. And there is nothing more enrages or provokes Men, than to have things *utterly false* laid to their Charge.

The next step therefore is, for both Parties to fly to Power and Authority; mutually endeavouring to bear down and suppress each other. And if it so happen, that sometimes one, and sometimes the other seems favour'd and regarded, their Spirits become still more envenom'd and exasperated against one another, by their alternate Fall and Rise. But if Authority intirely sides with one, so as to seek the utter Subversion and Ruin of the other, even Self-defence will put Men upon dangerous and desperate Attempts: or possibly Justice and Heaven may take part with the oppressed, whilst the Powers on Earth espouse a Cause that makes them Oppressors: or sometimes, it may be, the Ruling Powers are split, and engag'd in different Interests: In all which Cases, during the Continuance of such Struggles, there must be unspeakable Confusion and Disorders. So that as far as this appears to be a just Account of the Proceedings of Envy and Strife, the natural and necessary Consequence is *Tumult, and every evil Work.*

2. This is appointed and fix'd by the just Judgment of God. Such Sins carry their Punishment along with them: And since God has thus connected them by expressly declaring, that *where Envy and Strife is, there is Confusion, and every evil Work*; 'tis in vain for Men to think of separating them.

He that gives way to such Vices, or thinks to make a safe Use of them, by encouraging or cherishing them in Any, to serve Purposes of State, must act the Politician to the utmost, and to a degree that never any Man has yet been able to do, if he either preserve himself or others from the miserable Consequences of such prevailing Envy and Contention. It will not always shew it self in such a Manner, or fix upon those Objects which it may be directed to; but presently turns wild and uncontrollable, and many times runs with greatest Violence upon the first Exciters and Promoters of it.

'Tis certain, that where Envy and Strife is, the God of Peace and Order withdraws; and so, both in their Thoughts and Conduct, Men are left to continual Mistakes and Irregularities; and their Hearts are left to harden more and more to their own Destruction. Every grateful, tender, just, and pious Sentiment is overpower'd. And the very means whereby Men should be recovered, and brought to their right Mind, they are prejudic'd against. So that being judicially deserted and blinded, *seeing they see, but do not perceive; and hearing they hear, but do not understand*: what they see and hear has no proper Effect and Influence upon them: Yea, to such a height may this Infatuation arise, as to carry 'em headlong to Destruction, *Matth. xiii. 14, 15.*

Besides,

Besides, the *Devil*, who is the grand Promoter of all Strife, and its consequent Miseries, by God's Departure, obtains a full Power and Influence. And what can be expected from him, who was a Murderer from the beginning, but that he should drive things to the utmost Extremity, and urge Men on to every evil Work, that his Enmity both to our Holiness and Happiness, can suggest?

So that by the just Judgment of God, expressly denounc'd in his Word, and accomplish'd by his Departure, and the Devil's Agency, Tumults and Profaneness, and the greatest Calamities must follow *Strife* and *Envy*.

3. This is evident from *Experience* and former *Examples*. *Cain's* Envy was never satisfied till he had murder'd his Brother. *Saul's* Envy made him persecute *David*, and with implacable Hatred hunt after his Life. *Joab's* Envy put him upon killing *Abner* and *Amasa*.

So also, when a Spirit of Envy and Contention has been thoroughly stir'd up in *Nations*, publick and dreadful Desolations have always ensued. None that ever read or heard of the *Destruction* of the *Jews*, can be unmindful of the horrid Confusions and Impieties that their intestine Strifes and Divisions led to. Their Contentions were growing indeed for many Years, before they broke out into that open Violence, which made 'em the Executioners of one another. Their popular Tumults were frequent and great; their Superstitious and Ecclesiastical Contentions very high; the two grand Parties of *Pharisees* and *Saducees* were violently enrag'd; and the Impiety of both was notorious in rejecting the Offers of Grace and Salvation. In all which one might

plainly see a Preparedness for the Ruin that came upon them. In the most barbarous and impious Manner at last they devoured one another. Shedding each others Blood at that very *Altar*, which should have commanded the greatest Reverence toward God, and Charity toward their Brethren. They brought Famine and Pestilence by firing each others Provisions and Stores of Corn: And, in short, they stuck at nothing that might promote their utter Extirpation.

But to turn our Thoughts to later Times, and even to our own Country; What Miseries and Calamities did Envy and Strife bring upon these Nations, in the breaking out of the *Civil Wars*, and in the unhappy Consequences of them? The carrying Things to an excessive and unjustifiable Height one way, was certainly the Reason of their being carried to such an Extremity another.

Those who know any thing of the Managements in the *Star-Chamber* and *High Commission-Court*, will not wonder at the contrary Proceedings of the *Parliament* * (I mean while truly and properly call'd such) for the removing those

* My Lord Clarendon's *History* acknowledges thus much concerning the *High Commission-Court*. "Of late it cannot be denied, that by the great Power of some Bishops at Court, it had much overflow'd its Banks; not only in meddling with things that in truth were not properly within their Cognizance, but extending their Sentences and Judgments in matters tryable before them, beyond that degree that was justifiable, &c. Vol. I. Octavo, p. 283, &c." And at the Beginning of the *History*, p. 5. "Whoever considers the Acts of Power and Injustice of some of the Ministers, in the Intervals of Parliament, will not be much scandaliz'd at the Warmth and Vivacity of those Meetings.

Grievances which had occasion'd universal Uneasinesses and Complaints.

Whatever therefore was the Consequence of that lamentable Breach which was made betwixt the King and his People, those who were the first Occasioners of it, ought, in the first place, to be look'd upon as Guilty.

The more I have acquainted my self with the History of those Times, the more I wonder at such Men as are continually ascribing those fatal Divisions to Religion; when it is plain, that for several Years, Religion was not concern'd in the Quarrel. They were Matters of State, and of the Civil Government; illegal raising of Money; discontinuing of Parliaments for twelve Years together; with several Tryals of Men, and very hard Sentences past upon them, for things that would by no means justify such Severity; sometimes Forces were raised, and Fleets fitted out to no purpose, and at other times, as was suspected, to ill purpose: These, I say, and such like things, were the first Occasions of publick Strife and Contention.

And if Religion, together with these things, was insisted on, it was no more than what every one might expect, when the Queen was a Papist, and Archbishop *Laud* was so very severe upon all that did not come as near the Papists as himself. 'Tis true, he writ against a Jesuit, and he made frequent Applications to the King for the suppressing of such; but he was thought to have so much of the Spirit of *Popery*, as it is a Spirit both of *Tyranny* and *Superstition*, as gave a general Alarm.

larm *. It is certain, a great many good Men were Sufferers by the Archbishop's Advice and Proceedings †. And 'tis notorious, that matters were so ordered with respect to Church Government and Discipline, that most Men were offended, and exclaim'd against the Innovations ||. His making *new Canons* for the Church

* Hence it was that Sir Edward Deering declared, in a Committee in the House of Commons, "That a Pope at Rome would do him less hurt than a Patriarch might do at Lambeth, &c. Compl. Hist. of Engl. Vol. III. p. 98. A Motion was also then made, "That a Committee should be selected and impower'd to make Discovery of the Numbers of oppressed Ministers under the Bishops Tyranny for ten Years last past (viz. from 1630. to 1640.) Ibid.

† See an Account of his Aversion to all that he suspected of Calvin's Sentiments. Lord Clarendon's Hist. Vol. I. Oct. p. 91. "Tho' they reverenc'd the Government, and pray'd for the Peace of the Church with as much Zeal and Fervency as any of the Kingdom." Again, "Persons of Honour and great Quality, of the Court, and of the Country, were every Day cited into the High Commission-Court, and were there prosecuted to their Shame and Punishment for one Scandal or other laid to their Charge. Ibid. p. 94.

|| See the Life of Bishop Williams. My Lord Clarendon says this of him, He published a Discourse and Treatise against the Matter and Manner of the Prosecution of that Business: A Book so full of good Learning, and that Learning so close and solidly applied (tho' it abounded with too many light Expressions) that it gain'd him Reputation enough to be able to do Hurt; and shew'd, that in his Retirement, he had spent his time with his Books very profitably. We may therefore very well shew a Regard to the Innovations complain'd of in the Exercise of Religion by so great and learned a Man. But my Lord Clarendon further adds, He was ambitious to have it believ'd, that the Archbishop was his greatest Enemy; for his having constantly opposed his rising to any Government in the Church, as a Man, whose HOT and HASTY Spirit he had long known. Vol. I. p. 97.

of England, and contriving a new *Form of Service and Government* for the Church of Scotland, was what neither one Nation, nor the other was able to bear *. Especially, when at the same time, my Lord *Clarendon* tells us, There were other Bishops, who with more Passion, and less Circumspection than the Archbishop himself, prosecuted those who opposed them †.

All this while the *Papists* too grew exceedingly; *Proclamations* were publish'd, commanding the Laws to be put in Execution against them; but when they were taken up and committed to Prison, by one means or other they were set at Liberty again ||. The *Massacre* in Ireland, "where fifty thousand of the *English* Protestants were murder'd before they suspected themselves to be in any Danger, or could provide for their Defence," was enough, one would have thought, to have justified the severest Prosecutions of the *Papists* every where; and yet, after this, when some of them were condemned, Reprieves were produc'd under the King's own Hand **.

So that now Men begun to think their Lives as well as Liberties, and all that was dear to 'em, lay at stake. And, therefore, the Members of Parliament resolved, to the utmost, to exert themselves. And all those who were thought to have

* See the Lord Clarendon's *Hist.* Vol. I. p. 150.

† Vol. I. p. 96.

|| See Lord Clarendon's *Hist.* Vol. I. p. 148. *The Story of Secretary Windebank*, p. 179. ** Here is a famous Passage in the same History, Vol. II. p. 456.

brought on the publick Calamities, were look'd upon as Men not fit to live. Some fled their Country, others were executed in it; and the *whole Kingdom was divided against it self.*

Those who thought their Miseries owing to the Temper and Proceedings of the Bishops, could not think themselves safe, but by abolishing of Prelacy it self. And it must be acknowledged, that matters were carried at last to an Extreme, by no means to be justified.

When Armies were raised, I see no other that could reasonably be expected, but that the Conquering Army should take upon 'em to govern the Nation. And when the Government was become entirely Military, no Civil Power could withstand it; nor were the Ministers of Religion at all regarded. Dreadful Battles had been fought, Rivers of Blood had been shed, and if at last Royal Blood was mingled with the rest, it serves as the greater Evidence of this Truth, that where *Envy and Strife is, there is Confusion, and every evil Work.*

As for those that were concerned in the Death of the King, such Men must resolve to say any thing, as can lay it, from Year to Year, upon the *Presbyterians*. 'Tis well known the *Members of Parliament* that were *Presbyterians*, did oppose such Proceedings till they were excluded the House: And a *very faithful Historian* assures us, " That the *Ministers* of that Denomination, then every where, preach'd and pray'd against Disloyalty: Yea, they drew up a Writing to the *Lord General*, declaring their Abhorrence of all Violence against the *Person* of the King, and urging him and
his

on the XXXIst. of January, 171³/₄. 17

“ his Army to take heed of such an *Unlawful Act* *.

When after all they could do, they were not able to prevent the Mischief that ensued, “ they
“ still opposed entring into any Engagements
“ for the establishing a *Common-wealth*, (however they are now revil’d as Republicans)
“ and insisted upon it as trifling and jesting with
“ Matters of the greatest Importance so to do.
“ At the same time, those who had before pretended most to Loyalty, found out ways to
“ plead for Non-resistance to their new Governours and Imposers; as if they had no other
“ Principle (says my Author) but to be of the
“ Side that was uppermost.

Having so fair an Occasion, I beg leave to observe, that *Monarchy* is no way inconsistent

* I wish I could in this, as in former Passages, have referred to my Lord Clarendon’s History. The Fact was publick enough to come to his knowledge; tho’, by the Account given of the Presbyterians, ’tis plain, that he was an utter stranger both to the Men, their Sentiments, and Proceedings. And withal, there appears so prodigious an Aversion to them in the Author, and especially the Publishers of that History, that it is in vain to look for one fair or just thing that is said concerning them. However, since we have a publick Vindication printed in 1648. it is sufficient that we are able to quote, out of it, such Words as these: “ We hold our selves bound in Duty to God,
“ Religion, the King, Parliament, and Kingdom, to profess
“ before God, Angels, and Men, that we verily believe, that
“ which is so much feared to be now in Agitation, the taking
“ away of the Life of the King, in the present Way of Tryal,
“ is not only not agreeable to the Word of God, the Principles
“ of the Protestant Religion (never yet stained with the least
“ Drop of the Blood of a King) or the Fundamental Constitution and Government of this Kingdom; but, contrary to
“ them, as also to the Oath of Allegiance, &c.”

with *Presbytery*. Witness the Government of *Scotland*. Nor is there any thing in the Tempers and Principles of the *Dissenters* now in *England*, that should give the least reason to speak of them as *Antimonarchical*. It hath been the Lot of Episcopal Men, as one observes, more frequently to comply with Kings than others have done: But this ariseth not from any peculiar innate Disposition in the one, or the other; but from Causes extrinsical and plain to every ones Observation.

It must therefore, in these and other Cases, be look'd upon as one very great Evil which has sprung from the Strife and Envy of those unhappy Times, that, to this Day, Men are bringing Railing and false Accusations against their Brethren. And, I am afraid, there is Ill-will enough cherish'd and excited among us to throw us again into Confusion, and to bring on fresh Mischiefs upon us. If Almighty God in Mercy prevent it not, I am sure some Men are taking the Way to make us as miserable as ever. But that may lead me,

III. To draw *some Inferences* from what has been said.

1. We may from hence be inform'd, who are the *most dangerous Persons in a State or Kingdom*: Namely, those who are the Promoters of *Strife* and *Envy*; to them it is that we must ascribe *Confusion*, and every evil Work. When therefore we see Men of furious and inflamed Spirits rise up among us, one would expect that All should appear concerned to suppress and restrain them. There are no Sort of Persons this Nation has so much reason to fear

as INCENDIARIES, whatever Quarter they arise from, or whatever Party they pretend to espouse: I would look upon such as I would upon a Meteor, or blazing Star; portending great Calamities to the Age and Country in which they appear, Yea, many times they are the Causes, at the least the Instruments, of *effecting* the Miseries they *fore-run*.

The different Opinions, Ways, and Customs of Men, which give no Disturbance till these Inflamers have heated and ruffled their Tempers; yet, when Men are once sour'd and provok'd against one another, every little Difference becomes a Grievance, and an intolerable thing. Hereby Kingdoms, Towns, and Families are divided, and sometimes destroy'd, upon those pretended Reasons, that would never have been mentioned, had not this wretched Temper put Men upon seeking for Occasions of Quarrelling with each other.

From hence 'tis evident, that such as would draw others into Heats and Passions, whose Tongues are as a Fire kindling the Spirits of all about them, are much more dreadful and dangerous Persons than any of those upon whom they may fix reproachful Names and Characters. *Schismaticks, Seditious, Factions, Rebellious*, and the like, are Words that do much more Mischief in the Mouths of such, than those, to whom they are apply'd, dare once imagine. If this Nation is ever truly sensible of its own Interest and Happiness, it will be thought much more necessary to curb such Spirits and Tempers, than to punish Men for any private and particular Opinions.

2. We may, from what has been said, infer, that *true Christianity* will most effectually *secure the Safety and Prosperity of Kingdoms*. It warns Men of the Consequences of *Strife and Envy*. It strictly forbids all *Wrath, and Anger, and Malice, and Evil-speaking*. And, on the contrary, commands Men to be *meek and lowly*; *forbearing one another, and forgiving one another*. It teaches us to look with *Tenderness* on the *Infirmities* of the *Weak*; and with *Compassion* even on the *Wicked*; doing all we can to inform and save, but nothing to enrage and provoke them. Christianity forbids all *boasting* of our *Wisdom* or *Attainments*, and despising others; as likewise all *discontent* with our *own Condition*, and murmuring at others. It teaches us to suffer a *many* Injuries, rather than offer *one*. It directs *Magistrates* to Rule in *Righteousness* and *Mercy*; and *Subjects* to obey, not from *Fear* only, but for *Conscience* sake. It requires the *Ministers of Religion* to speak the Words of *Truth* and *Soberness*; and with *Meekness* to *convince those that oppose themselves*: Their *Hearers* also are required to receive the Word of God with *Meekness* and *Love*, and to *honour those that Labour* amongst 'em, *very highly, in love, for their Works* sake. It teaches all Men to be *kindly affectioned one to another*. And, in short, it enjoyns *Love and Charity* to such a *Degree*, and according to such a *Pattern*, that, where it prevails, it must needs drive away all the Evils spoken of in our Text; and, at the same time, secure all contrary Blessings and Advantages.

3. They

3. *They act exceedingly amiss* then, who make any of the *Principles of Religion*, or the *Times of God's Worship*, serve for *Strife and Debate*. This has been too much the Practice of contentious Men, to fetch in the great Truths of the Gospel only to serve their particular Humours and Designs. And publick Preaching, which is an Ordinance of God, has thus been turn'd to God's Dishonour, and the Discredit of those, who would be thought to speak in his Name. By whose means the most awful Doctrines have lost a great deal of their Weight and Sense: And the divine Worship has lost much of that Respect and Reverence which otherwise it would have commanded.

The 30th of *January Fasts*, we have reason especially to complain of being thus perverted. Instead of being solemnized by a humble reflecting upon, and heartily bewailing the Vices and Contentions, which once prov'd so destructive; some Men are doing all they can to revive our Jealousies and Uneasinesses, cherishing an implacable Temper against a whole Body of Men; for an Action, which is as generally abhorr'd among us, as among themselves: And our Fathers did more to have prevented it, than many of theirs did. Tho' some indeed of our warmest Accusers are the Children of those Men, that were then of the same Denomination with our selves.

The *Dissenters* have rather chosen to be silent upon the stated Returns of these Days, than to say any thing that should renew, or widen our Breaches; and keep up those Heart-burnings, by which this Nation has suffered so much. This Behaviour we think most suitable
to

to the Religion we profess; and most conducive to the Healing those Disorders that have been our Shame and Misery in former Times. And, particularly, we think it most agreeable to the *Act of Parliament* afterwards pass'd, in which the Faults of both Parties are expressly refer'd to, and said to be put in utter Oblivion. First, those are mentioned that acted by *Virtue or Colour of any Command, Power, Authority, Commission, Warrant, or Instruction from his late Majesty CHARLES, &c.* Then, on the other hand, those are mentioned, who *deriv'd Authority of or from both Houses, or either House of PARLIAMENT, or of or from any Convention, or Assembly called, or reputed, or taking on them the Name of a Parliament—* And then declares on both Sides, *that they be pardoned, releas'd, indemnify'd, discharg'd, and put in utter Oblivion.*

But do the railing Men among us behave themselves suitably to this Direction? What signifies an *Act of Oblivion*, if Men do all that ever they can to revive former Quarrels? And care not what they say whilst they are loading, a present quiet, and most peaceable Set of Men, with all, that may fire the Spirits of their too much prejudic'd and inflamed Hearers.

Again, What signifies the Word of God it self, when so little regard is shown to so plain a Text, as that in *Isa. 58. 4. Behold ye fast for Strife and Debate, and to smite with the Fist of Wickedness; ye shall not fast as ye do this Day, to make your Voice to be heard on high,*

For

For my own part, I cannot but think the Envy and Strife, which has of late been stirred up, must lead to some dreadful Confusion and Calamities.

4. The Text I am upon may inform us, *what Religious Societies*, and also *what common Acquaintance*, should be chosen, or avoided by us.

It is not a want of Uniformity in outward Rites and Ceremonies that makes Confusion in Churches; but the want of Love, and of a peaceable, charitable Temper. He that sows *Discord amongst Brethren the Lord hates*, Prov. vi. 19. And therefore, where such preside over any Assemblies, we have little reason to expect a Blessing on their Ministrations. The Spirit of Christianity, is a *Spirit of Love*, and of a *sound Mind*: So that where Anger, and a wild Enthusiastical Rage transports Men, to speak in the softest Language, we must say, they know not *what manner of Spirit they are of*. For thus our Saviour rebuk'd his Disciples when they would have called for *Fire from Heaven* on the Samaritans that would not receive them, Luke ix. 55. Where we see most of *Peace* and *Holiness*, Heb. xii. 14. there, undoubtedly, is most of a Gospel Spirit, and most of a Resemblance to that Society, we are preparing to sit down with, in the Kingdom of God. To such therefore should we chuse to joyn our selves here on Earth; for this we may be assured of, that where *Envy* and *Strife* is, there will be, in Religious as well as Civil Societies, *Confusion*, and every evil *Work*.

By

By this also I would be directed in chusing my *common Acquaintance*. If I see a Person of a grudging, envious Temper, uneasy at the Advantages of those about him, and contriving to give them Disturbance, or to lessen and defame them, I would make it my constant Care to avoid the Conversation of such; and, especially, if I observe any thing of Religion brought in, to support, or to consecrate so vile a Disposition. And as to Strife or Passion, Solomon has, in very plain Words, advised to *make no Friendship with an angry Man*: Adding further, *With a furious Man thou shalt not go*, Prov. xxii. 24. 'Tis certainly one way to avoid Confusion, and a great many Mischiefs, to keep Company most with those that we find the freest from *Strife and Envy*.

5. We may infer the *Misery of that World where these Evils continually prevail*. It gives one a most terrible Notion of Hell, to think of the endless Reproaches, Contentions, Uproars and Confusions that abound there. When Mens Passions shall be inflamed to the utmost, and let loose upon themselves, and one another; and when they shall have nothing to sooth, amuse, or divert them, as here they have; but all the Malice and Art of Devils engag'd in adding to them; What Words can possibly describe the Horrors and Anguish of Mind that must arise from hence? In this World we have sometimes a bright Scene succeeds a dark and dismal one; but there no Ray of cheering Light, no Dawn of Peace and Mercy shall ever appear. There is nothing but *weeping*, and *wailing*, and *gnashing of Teeth*.

In the last Place, How *desirable a State and World is that, where none of these Evils ever come.* Where, instead of Envy and Strife, we shall be all Love and Goodness; perfectly happy in what every one enjoys, and perfectly pleas'd with the Happiness of those about us. Instead of Confusion, there will be perpetual Order and Harmony. And no evil Work shall ever be known there. The Workers of Iniquity are banish'd from those blissful Regions to Eternity; and those, whose Garments have once been cleansed in the Blood of the Lamb, shall never more defile them. To conclude, Heaven is the Region of Light and Love; no Ignorance, or Ill-will, or any thing that should occasion Uneasiness and Contention, can be found there. Our Mistakes will all be remov'd, our Natures heal'd; our Faculties and our Graces improv'd to the utmost; and all Sorrow and Sighing shall be done away. There the *Wicked cease from troubling; there the Weary are at rest; there the Oppressed are exalted, and those that were persecuted for Righteousness sake crown'd with Glory.* All the Evils our Text speaks of will then be as distant as Hell is from Heaven, and shall remain eternally so. Here therefore let us fix our Expectations and Desires: And then take care that we do not fall short of that Felicity for want of any necessary Preparations.

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P O S T S C R I P T.

T'HE foregoing Sermon was preach'd without the least Thought of Printing it. And therefore was writ in a Manner that oblig'd me wholly to transcribe it, when I resolv'd upon thus complying with the Request of my Friends. I should be glad, if what is here offered may any way contribute to a right Understanding the *Anniversary* of the 20th of January, as to what concerns the *Protestant Dissenters*. And tho' I am very apprehensive of a discouraging Unavailableness, in all our Attempts, at present; yet, I hope, they may not be *altogether*, nor will they *always* remain ineffectual. However, I am perswaded of this, that it is a much wiser and safer Way, fairly and justly to state our Case and Sentiments, than to be *silent*. Falshoods had not so generally prevailed, nor the Spirits of People been rais'd to such a Pitch of Enmity thereby, if some Men had not been *asleep*, whilst others were sowing *Tares*.

If the *Dissenters* were better understood and known in the World, I am satisfied it would fare better with them: And I have often thought it the Unhappiness of a great many of them, that, whilst some of their Opposers can say the meanest and the most mistaken Things, to Advantage, they have neglected to set Things, which have been both true and great, in a Light that should be acceptable. Their *Integrity* indeed is their *Glory*; but it will not be their *Security*, I am afraid, in such an Age as this.

The

The Publishers of my Lord Clarendon's *History*, in *Two Dedications* to the QUEEN, have said Things black enough, if better Information be not given, not only to set *Her Majesty* implacably against us, but the whole *Legislative Authority*; which they have thought fit to call upon. I have never been able to read that Passage without pain, when I have thought what might be the *Effect* of it. *Whilst these Men most falsely asperse the Sons of the Church of England for being Jacobites, let them rather clear themselves of what they were lately charged before your Majesty*, (meaning, I suppose, in a former Dedication of their own, or in some private Whispers; for there never was any legal or publick Charge drawn up against any for what they alledge) *that there are Societies of them which celebrate the horrid Thirtieth of January, with an execrable Solcmnity of scandalous Mirth; and that they have Seminaries, and a sort of Universities, in England, maintain'd by great Contributions, where the fiercest Doctrines against Monarchical and Episcopal Government are taught and propagated; and where they bear an implacable Hatred to your Majesty's Title, Name, and Family.*

I could think of nothing that could relieve my Uneasiness under so false a Charge, but that of the *Psalmist*, in *Psal. cxx. 2, 3. Deliver my Soul, O Lord, from lying Lips, and from a deceitful Tongue. What shall be given unto thee? Or, what shall be done unto thee thou false Tongue?* For a greater Falshood, I think, was never publish'd by Tongue or Pen; at least, so far as I have any Acquaintance with that sort of Universities. And there are some now, very frequently with the QUEEN, that, if they please, can do us Justice, from their own knowledge, in this particular.

But

But to make sure work of it, that *Dedication* has taken a Way, as far as may be, to prevent any regard to our Assurances and Protestations, when the QUEEN is thus apply'd to, *There is no doubt, Madam, but every thing that is represented to your Majesty of this Nature, will find a Party ready to deny it; that will joyn hand in hand to assure the World there is no such thing; it is a common Cause, and it is their Interest, if they can, to perswade Men, that it is only the Heat and Warmth of High-Church Inventions that suggest such Fears and Jealousies. Namely, the overthrowing the Monarchy, and perpetuating the Destruction of it.*

It is no wrong to say of some, who have given themselves the Name of High-Church, that they are Men of the warmest and hottest Inventions in the World: But I am sure Others must be greatly wrong'd and injur'd, if They should once engross, all Credit and Right to be believ'd, to themselves. There are some, I hope, among those they vilify, that make as much Conscience of speaking Truth, as they do; and that neither for the sake of Interest, nor a common Cause, would dare to deny a known Truth, or to spread a known Falshood. For my self, I would not do it to gain the Regards, or to serve the Interest of any Party in the World.

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